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Hardwick, James Richard George

A West Australian railway employee killed while on military service for their country



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Cleaner

Rail employment notes: Born 1/12/1896. Joined WAGR 14/12/1915 aged 19 as Cleaner, Narrogin. ("Cleaner" in this case was a position in the Locomotive branch, cleaning locomotives and otherwise working around a locomotive depot whilst training to be a Fireman, the next step up the ladder)

Granted leave to join AIF 18/3/1916. Died of illness 5/11/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	39th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	2832
Date of death:	5 November 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	21
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension, Abbeville, Picardie, France

James Richard Hardwick enlisted at the Blackboy Hill Camp and then subsequently trained at that camp. The Army authorities had some difficulty in deciding which unit to assign him to. His papers show that he was first considered for 7th Reinforcements to 5 Pioneer Battalion then 20th Reinforcements to 16 Battalion before being allocated to 6th Reinforcement to 39th Battalion. (This was a very unusual unit to receive West Australian enlistees.)

After basic training he departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle aboard HMAT *Persic* on 29 December 1916 and disembarked at Devonport (near Plymouth) in England on 3 March 1917. He marched into 10 Training Battalion on 21 March 1917 and then transferred to the camp of 67 Battalion on 28 April 1917. On 2 May 1917 he was admitted to hospital with a sprained knee. This injury resulted in him being medically downgraded on 14 July 1917 before he was reclassified as fit for full duty on 28 July 1917. He subsequently crossed to France and spent 5 days at Australian depot before being taken on strength of 39 Battalion in the field. He was hospitalized with severe Scabies on 3 January 1918 before being discharged on 9 January 1918. On 17 March 1918 he was granted UK leave until 4 April 1918 when he resumed duty with 39 Battalion.

It would seem that his duty at this time was as a signaller between 39 Battalion and 10 Brigade HQ. His unit was actively involved in the Battle of Amiens and the 100-day campaign. On 28 October 1918 he presented sick with Influenza at 10 Field Ambulance, was transferred to 3 Australian General

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Hospital, listed as seriously ill, developed Broncho-Pneumonia and died on 5 November 1918. (Europe was then experiencing the so-called 'Spanish flu' pandemic)

He was buried the following day in the Abbeville Community Cemetery (Extension) Picardie.

Additional/personal information:

James Hardwick's birth was registered in Perth in 1897, the son of James Lewis Hardwick and Selina (née Taylor), as were 3 sisters and a brother.

After his death his parents placed a notice in *The West Australian* 18/11/1918p1

> HARDWICK.—On November 5, at 3rd Australian General Hospital, died of pneumonia, Private James Richard Hardwick, 39th Battalion, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. James Hardwick, Wickham-street, East Perth; aged 21 years.

By the time his parents had been notified and could place their notice, Germany had surrendered and the war was officially ended.

Further information and/or photos may be added as available. Information may also be found on the Australian War Memorial website: *https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people*

Abbreviations: WAGR= Western Australian Government Railways (& Tramways at some periods); MRWA= Midland Railway of Western Australia; BDM=Western Australian Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages website; AWM=Australian War Memorial (Canberra and website); CWGC= Commonwealth War Graves Commission (including website). DVA=Department of Veterans' Affairs (including website)

Acknowledgements: Rail employment notes from WAGR Honour Roll and WAGR records held by State Records Office, Perth, transcribed by J.Austin 2019. Military information researched by Dr G.M.Galvin. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------

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